



Leading Boldy, Working Together

2007 State of the City Address

March 15, 2007 Coronado Theatre



2007 State of the City Address

Good Evening.

Aldermen, fellow elected officials, city employees, community leaders, and fellow citizens.

Twenty-two months ago, we set out on a course for positive change. Rockford committed to **Excellence Everywhere and Excellence for Everyone** and we began to drive that change with ambitious goals and a spirit of cooperation. We set out to make sure fulfillment would not fall short of expectation. Tonight I can report with great pride that the City of Rockford is succeeding because we are **Leading Boldly and Working Together**.

This has been an extraordinary year, filled with promises kept, challenges met, and successes achieved. We have lived up to our pledge of bringing positive change and moving Rockford forward. I am pleased to report that Rockford continues to Rise and that the State of Our City **IS** strong and ready for action.

This has been an extraordinary year, filled with promises kept, challenges met, and successes achieved. Rockford continues to Rise and the State of the City **IS** strong and ready for action.

- Unemployment is lower;
- Crime in the weed and seed zones has been reduced;
- We have balanced the budget **with** a lower property tax rate;
- The anti-truancy plan is rescuing our children;
- There are new livable wage jobs with many more on the way;
- And, ONCE AND FOR ALL THE VEHICLE STICKER IS DEAD!



Real change requires real work. The business of this City is not easy. I am proud that we have worked through tough issues together as a City Council, City organization, and our regional partners. We will continue to have tough issues to consider and debate. I am proud that our City Council has tackled truancy, passed critical quality of life ordinances, and made important investments in our water system, our MetroCentre, and our Harrison Avenue reconstruction.



Would our Aldermen please rise? Thank you Aldermen for your hard work and your continued commitment to the progress and change demanded by our citizens.

By **Leading Boldly and by Working Together** we have accomplished great things. I look forward to working with you this year as we continue our progressing towards:

- An Educational system that achieves results and encourages life-long learning;
- Neighborhoods where families are safe and prosper;
- City government that is efficient, responsive and accountable; and
- A competitive economic climate, leading to business growth, more jobs, and greater investment in our future.

Leading Boldly
Working Together

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Let us begin then by discussing our schools and let me repeat what I have said so often before, **as go our schools, so goes the City of Rockford.**

When I took office, I said the City would get involved in education and that's exactly what we've done. Last year, I introduced Adam Smith as the City's first Director of Education and Life Long Learning. Over the last year, Adam has helped us achieve outstanding success in our effort to achieve **excellence in education.**



Truancy

We started by tackling truancy because we know there is a direct connection between the overall health of a City and its truancy rate. This required partnering with the School District, the State's Attorney's office, our Circuit Court, and the United Way, as well as writing and passing a new City ordinance.



Such an ordinance was made possible through the leadership of State Representative Chuck Jefferson who worked with the state legislature to grant Rockford the authority needed to put kids back in school.

We developed a comprehensive program that holds both parents and children accountable and stresses the value of an education.

And the great news is that by the end of December our Truancy rate had dropped from 9.6% to 7.9%. A new report from the District tells us that the rate continues to drop through February of '07, which means more kids in school every day getting an education; and as attendance rises, it means more State financial support for our district.

But we cannot rest. There is more work to do. The attendance rates must be better, especially at the high school level. As we continue our efforts, we will rely on Truancy Intervention Specialists in the schools to counsel our youth. We must continue to develop creative strategies for positive life experiences and positive marketing to promote educational aspiration. This is the reason we began the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council.

Youth Summit/MYAC/nFactor

In May of 2006 we held the first **Mayor's Youth Summit**. The summit was attended by teens from throughout our Rockford high schools and led to the formation of the **Mayor's Youth Advisory Council or MYAC**.

MYAC is a diverse and dedicated group of teen advocates who were chosen to advise our administration and to lead their peers. One of the most visible accomplishments from the group this year has been the launch of the **"nFactor"** – a multi-tiered program which includes events and activities, membership rewards, community service, and extensive marketing. The **"nFactor"** highlights the value of education and supports teens showing other teens positive life choices.



By now, you have noticed the outdoor billboards, TV commercials, the t-shirts and events featuring the **"nFactor"** logo and message. The effort pushes a strong, honest message to combat the deceptions our young people deal with every day. I thank the companies and individuals who have helped sponsor our efforts to help make our first year of the program a success.

As put so eloquently by Caitlin Hanson, one of our MYAC members, in the February 12, 2007 *Rockford Register Star*:

"The teenagers of today are really the leaders of our future. We are the people who will, in just a few years, be making the important decisions for everyone. Teens are much more determined and driven than many adults make us out to be, especially with the increasing competition to get into the right colleges and universities. With the right motivation, we can accomplish anything."

Thank you Caitlin for your leadership and the leadership of all the MYAC members. I am please to give these young people the opportunity to lead. For their part, they are putting forth the hard work that creates great leaders.

Zone Schools

Excellence in education cannot be adequately addressed without recognizing our School District for taking the steps needed to develop a School Zone plan for the 2007-2008 school year. While difficult and controversial, this was and is the right thing to do for our families and our neighborhoods and for Rockford.

Excellence Everywhere means that we will not accept low performing schools in any neighborhood. By leading boldly and working together, we can build strong schools in every neighborhood and strong neighborhoods to support every school.



Higher Education

To compete in a global marketplace, our children must aspire beyond high school to pursue advanced education. To accomplish this goal, we are joining forces with the colleges and universities that make up the **Higher Education Alliance of the Rock River Valley** to tackle Post Secondary aspiration and access. When students lack an educational vision beyond high school, and lack a connection to real jobs, many do not attend high school and do not graduate. These efforts focus on developing the value we place on education.



University Village of Rockford

But there is also a supply side of our local problem of educational attainment. We simply must increase opportunities for pursuing higher education in Rockford. We cannot be satisfied with having an outstanding public two-year degree opportunity through Rock Valley College, but lack significant, publicly supported 4-year degree opportunities. We can and must do more.

Over the past year, I have been discussing this problem with officials from Rockford College, the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Northern Illinois University and Rock Valley College. Based on these discussions, I am tonight calling for the development of a **University Village at the Rockford College Campus** and asking for State legislation to facilitate public-private investment and partnerships to make that campus a reality.

We have incredible strengths locally in the health and human science fields and in applied industrial engineering. We must work to help the colleges and university that have a presence here expand their efforts, perhaps through innovative "flexible education networks" similar to what a local entity like MARRV has done for manufacturing.

In other words, we must engineer the right programs to meet our young people where they are and help them to get their degrees right here in Rockford, Illinois. As a community, our local governments and the private sector can help build the buildings, but we need leadership from our public and private education partners to do their part. The time is now to get this done.

**Leading Boldly
Working Together**

Community Education Partnership

To make sure we achieve our education goals, we must move beyond ad-hoc committees and task forces. We must do more to develop a strong, consistent, relationship between our schools and colleges, our local governments and manufacturers; our employers and our community.



To accomplish this task, I am pleased to announce tonight the formation of the **Community Education Partnership**. I would like to recognize **Mr. Fritz Jacobi, Publisher of the Rockford Register Star**, who has volunteered to chair this organization with the assistance of the Mayor's office and the United Way.

This organization will ensure that we: foster our relationships with our education partners; continue to develop efforts like the **"nFactor"** and **University Village**, and we will pursue **Charter Schools** as well as a new initiative, **the Rockford Promise**.

Modeled off of a groundbreaking effort in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the **Rockford Promise** would pay the tuition and fees of higher education for children that graduate from our public schools.

Can we make that Promise in Rockford? Local supporter **Allen Gisnburgh** thinks so and I do too.

We look forward to the support of our business community and our residents to make these ideas a reality.

It is exactly this type of effort, **Leading Boldly and Working Together**, that will lead us to Excellence Everywhere.

NEIGHBORHOODS & PUBLIC SAFETY

Simply put, our neighborhoods are the backbone of our community. We are working to invest in every neighborhood so we can expect a return on that investment; and we're developing strong partnerships between our government and our citizens to achieve excellence in every neighborhood.

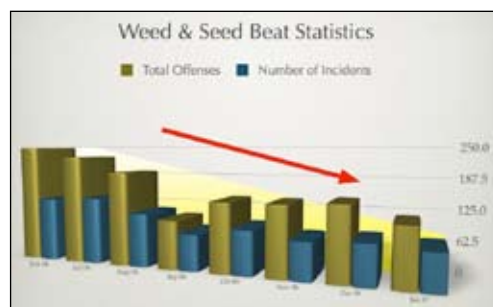
Weed and Seed

Our Weed and Seed strategy exemplifies our approach by tying creative law enforcement with economic development and investment.

Weed and Seed is a joint effort by the Rockford Police, Human Services, Community Development, Legal, and Building Departments working with the Winnebago County Sheriff's and Health Department. This diverse team has developed a strategic plan that includes four basic components:

- Community policing;
- Prevention;
- Intervention and treatment; and
- Neighborhood restoration

Weed and Seed aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in high-crime neighborhoods. Weed and Seed is an example of how we come together as a community to achieve safety and prosperity in our neighborhoods.



And it works. Our Weed and Seed effort has lead to real crime reduction, preparing the neighborhood for future investment. As we push out criminals and improve order, we are supporting families, job opportunities, and neighborhood revival.

**Leading Boldly
Working Together**

Creative Law Enforcement Strategies

In 2006, Chet Epperson became Rockford's new Chief of Police. He is a credit to the department and to our City; and I admire his innovation and his passion. He knows that to produce different results, we need new methods. He has hit the ground running and has launched innovative strategies, using accurate and timely intelligence to best deploy our law enforcement resources.

Over the past year, our police department has focused on several innovative, community based programs. We have added personnel to our gang units and community policing units; we have changed our command structure to better respond to community needs. We have also partnered with other law enforcement agencies through our Drug Enforcement Administration/Mobile Enforcement Team in a 10-week program to combat overt drug selling.

On January 22nd of this year, the Department launched the **M3 Street Team**, a multi-functional team that can be deployed in numerous situations throughout the City. The M3 Street Team is made up of 35 Rockford Police officers who approach crime from a strategic perspective using the 3M's: map, manage, and measure. This approach will map crime data; matches "cops to the dots" and measures our results to confirm effectiveness.



We will soon manage our Police Department around the CompStat model of accountability that was highly successful in New York City. Under this model, officers will better know their patrol zones, easily share ideas, be empowered through accountability, and reduce the number of repeat 911 calls. This model of police management reduces crime and lowers costs.

Strong, responsive public safety, requires a strong, responsive 911 Call Center. This fall, the Rockford 911 Center opened the doors to their remodeled facility. In partnership with Winnebago County, and managed by our Rockford Fire Department, our Downtown 911 facility features new equipment, including a radio system, phone system, computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system and state of the art GPS ability which allows call takers to better track and record emergency calls. We now have the ability to track the location and phone number of a caller using a cell phone to within 125 meters of their location, allowing for better emergency response and a safer community.



Quality of Life

In 2006, our City Council also continued to improve our citizens' quality of life by passing tougher ordinances, including one to address aggressive panhandling. This new law cracks down on the intimidation and fear imposed by solicitors that approach your car, approach you at night, refuse to take "no" for an answer, or camp out in the doorway of a business, discouraging customers from entering.

Neighborhood Network

Our police officers have a tough job and they cannot do it alone. We must partner with our citizens and our neighborhood groups to solve and prevent crimes. Our neighborhood organizations are critically important to this effort.

Consequently, the 2007 budget supports the revival of the **Neighborhood Network**, a citizen based group working to promote strong and healthy neighborhoods throughout the city.

Partnership for Better Housing

In 2006, we continued investment on the West Side as a record number of building permits were issued. We have seen new homes build like the River Walk condominiums on South Main, Lincolnwood II, Emerson Estates II, and the North Main Condominiums.

Since we met last year, the Rockford Housing Authority has also received authorization from HUD to demolish the old Jane Adams housing complex, which will help us revitalize that neighborhood. RHA has also hired a master developer to work with us on the far West Side to revitalize the old Concord Commons development.

Our partnership with Winnebago County in the Hope IV area around Concord Commons has already provided 18 newly constructed homes. In addition, 52 rental units have been constructed, and the installation of new curbs, gutters, storm sewers, and the surfacing of 8 streets, is ushering in a complete neighborhood renaissance.



In 2006, a new partnership with Winnebago County was also launched offering innovative employee assistance housing incentive program. This program was modeled after successful private sector efforts and offers down payment assistance to City and County employees for homes purchased in targeted areas of the city.

Our goal in 2007: Expand that partnership with Winnebago County and invite the School District to join us for a major, new housing incentive program.

Housing Property Tax Rebate Incentive

Our city's most significant policy challenge is poverty. Despite job growth and prosperity for some, we are still on the State's poverty warning list. To fight poverty and provide opportunity, we can no longer continue to lose our middle class families to surrounding regions. As Rebecca Ryan said in her recent report, to attract the "20 year old to 30 year old something" workers to Rockford, we have to revitalize our historic neighborhoods.

To that end it is my goal tonight, to launch in 2007 a **Housing Redevelopment Incentive Program** that will rebate for up to 10 years, the increased property tax increment resulting from substantial rehabilitation to existing homes or new construction investments for owner-occupied homes in our targeted redevelopment areas.

Along with this tax incentive, I will champion a program to promote green and high efficiency building standards. We have a great opportunity in our older neighborhoods to provide real incentives for livable, walkable, and affordable lifestyles, with some homes being zero-net energy. I look forward to working with our City Council and other local governments to make this program a reality in 2007. I look forward to **Leading Boldly and Working Together** to make this happen.

AN EFFICIENT AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

Our efforts to transform our neighborhoods and our education system have been equaled by our effort to transform and improve City government. In 2006 we accomplished several objectives to provide you with an improved city government

- First, I would like to thank our non-represented and AFSCME employees for working with us to modernize our employee health insurance program. Modernizing the structure of the plan means quality benefits at the lowest possible cost. Savings from these changes will keep our plan viable and help us invest in a much-needed wellness plan for our employees. Also, these savings allowed the city to reinvest in capital equipment for the police and fire departments for the first time since 2001.
- Our community vision and Council support also led to a new governance model for the Coronado Theatre and the Coronado Performing Arts Council. This new model, along with a new and very experienced leader **Michael Goldberg**, will help the Center achieve much warranted growth.
- In 2006, the City also acquired the Historic National Guard Armory Building at a significant discount. This investment will help us partner in the expansion and redevelopment of the Riverfront Museum Campus and we look forward to working with those partners this year to make that vision a reality.
- Recently, we have also begun examining our permit process from the initial request to build to the final award of the certificate of occupancy. Embracing the lean thinking process that has long been practiced in the private sector, we have partnered with the Rockford Area Economic Development Council and Rock Valley College. Our goal is to create an efficient process that encourages development in Rockford.



**Leading Boldly
Working Together**

- To be competitive as a region we must support stronger regional planning. We have built a solid foundation in this arena:
 - o In 2006, we broke new ground as we held the first known City-County retreat.
 - o We made great progress on rewriting our City Zoning Ordinance, as did the County with their Zoning Plan update.
 - o We also held our first ever, Policy Member retreat for the **Metropolitan Planning Organization**, affectionately known as **RATS**.
 - o Because I support expanding RATS to include land use planning as a core element, we will change the name to better reflect the broader agenda to the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning, or R-MAP. To make this happen, I am backing proposed State legislation that would provide for the first time, direct State funded support for this organization.

To make sure that smart growth planning becomes part of our local genetic code, I also support forming a broad-based citizen's organization to support our regional planning efforts. An organization like this was witnessed first hand in 2002 when many local leaders traveled to Chattanooga, TN to see how that community became revitalized. Janesville Wisconsin returned from that same trip and implemented their design center idea immediately.



In 2007, we will make that dream a reality when we create our own **Regional Center for Design and Planning**. Here we will build a culture of collaboration. Here we can house our R-MAP offices and showcase our regions' plans so everyone can learn about our rail or riverfront efforts; Here, everyone can see the plans for the 173 corridor to the north; and here, everyone can learn about the Belvidere Ag-Tech Center.

The Regional Center for Design and Planning will allow everyone can become part of the planning process. Communities like Janesville Wisconsin have such centers and call it an asset to their city. We will soon have just that asset in Rockford.

We are not short of good ideas in Rockford. We are short on execution. Since that visit in 2002, groups like the River District Association have advocated for bringing all of our planning together under one roof. By **Leading Boldly and Working Together** we can make this happen!

ROCKSTAT

At my address last year, I announced the development of our new management system: **ROCKSTAT**. ROCKSTAT is a management philosophy that drives better customer service and reduces cost through accountability and accuracy. ROCK-STAT will be a generational change in the way this government operates.

Thanks to the support of City Council, in 2006 we invested in and completed our first stage of implementation for a computer-based customer service tracking system: the backbone of ROCKSTAT. The rollout of our Customer Service Request System or CSR gives us a consistent and accurate means of entering citizen concerns and requests, of assigning and monitoring the work, and of tacking work assignments through to completion.

In February a group comprised of City staff, Aldermen, and community advisors traveled to Baltimore to view their CitiStat system, the model for our new effort. We returned from Baltimore energized! Baltimore showed us that effective change can and does happen in city government! I am proud to tell you tonight that our ROCKSTAT system in no longer a concept. It is a reality!

You are watching right now, an actual screen shot from the Baltimore CSR system:

Now, you are watching an actual screen shot taken from our CSR new system.



**Leading Boldly
Working Together**

We will move away from the old way of doing things:

- If the Mayor really wants to know, we can find out. But we'll have to pull all of our people off their jobs. And, it will take weeks.
- We'll get to that as soon as we can, but it will take a few months because our budget was cut last year.
- That's the way we've always done it/We're already doing that/ We tried that but it didn't work.
- I hope the City Council forgets about this before next year's budget hearing.

To a new way of doing things:

- Accurate and timely intelligence
- Develop effective strategies and tactics
- Allow for the rapid deployment of resources
- Relentless follow-up and assessment.

Central to the ROCKSTAT management strategy will be monthly accountability sessions with our departments. Like Baltimore, we will have a review team made up of officials from the Mayor's Office, Legal, IT, Finance, and HR Departments. With this process, we will review progress towards goals, identify areas to improve services, and focus on fiscal responsibility.

ROCKSTAT will bring you a method of accountability to help our march towards Excellence Everywhere. We will rely on the hard data that allows us to better manage our business and customer services processes. It is a management process that relies on real time information, not anecdotal evidence.

Community Stat

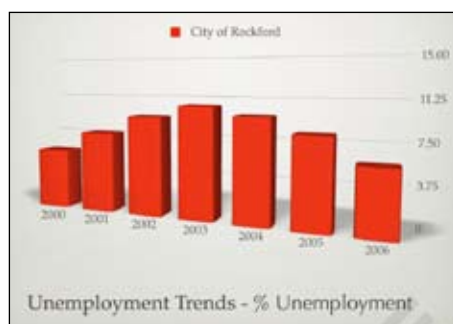
As the City of Rockford leads in the ROCKSTAT process, we have the opportunity to support other agencies efforts to promote accountability. In fact, a truly successful ROCKSTAT process will one day include some form of **"CommunityStat"** With the support of the United Way, NIU, and the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, we will explore ground breaking methods of improving the way governments and social service agencies help their clients.

Following the same concepts as ROCKSTAT these partners are developing a collaborative case management system that will provide a level of accountability for individual utilizing our community's vast array of social services.

We will accomplish goals such as ROCKSTAT and Community Stat because we are **Leading Boldly and Working Together.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Just a few years ago, there was far too much talk about Rockford on the decline. Our manufacturing base was struggling to remain solvent, our unemployment numbers were one of the highest in the nation, and the decent jobs at living wages were difficult to find. While we have much work ahead in our continuous improvement efforts, I am here to tell you tonight that we are a different city today than we were then!



Today, I am proud that this is a community filled with enterprising and optimistic leaders applying the fundamental principles upon which this city was build: innovation, commercialization, and entrepreneurship.

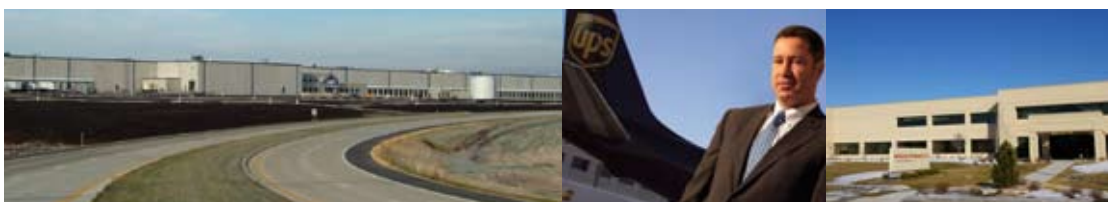
Leading Boldly
Working Together

Today, I can say to you that our January unemployment figures were at their lowest in years! Congratulations Rockford! Our successes today are due to many factors and many partnerships. When we have worked together, we have landed jobs. Where we have invested well in strong infrastructure, we have the new and expanded businesses to show for it. Where we have failed to invest in infrastructure, where we have failed to partner, we have quite simply, failed our citizens.

Tonight, I thank our partners at the Rockford Area Economic Development Council, with Winnebago County, and our Economic Development staff. These partnerships have been instrumental in the successes we have achieved in the Rockford region over the past year.

Let me highlight some of these wins:

- Rockford has become the home to one of Lowe's largest distribution centers in the United States where they will be hiring 700 employees.
- UPS has expanded and added 200 new positions with their recent \$40 million investment in the Sorting Facility located at the airport! I need to repeat that statement: UPS believes in our City and backs it up with investment! Their investment invites others to look at our airport and our city as an opportunity for developing new business.
- We recently finalized an incentive package to help long-time Rockford business leader Anderson Packaging, expand their operations to a 250,000 square foot state of the art packaging facility. This will provide 250 new manufacturing jobs to the Rockford region.



We are committed to retaining and growing jobs in our city. The investment shown by Anderson Packaging and others as they invest in Rockford speaks strongly to the culture of growth we have fostered in our business community. These examples demonstrate the cooperation that exists between RAEDC, the City and our elected officials, the County, and the private sector. I would like to thank you all for the work and investment you have put forth.

Minority Business Development/Procurement Policies

Our efforts to achieve economic prosperity and create a climate of investment mean that we must include all of our citizens and businesses in our pursuit of excellence. **Excellence Everywhere must include Everyone.**

I thank the members of our City Council for their work in establishing the City's first Minority and Women-owned Business Procurement ordinance to promote and expand minority and women-owned business opportunities.

We still have a significant amount of work to do to identify short and long-term participation goals; and we have to identify and develop minority business recruitment and development partnerships. This ordinance is more than we've ever done in the past and it will keep our focus on the goal of continuous improvement in this area.

Thank you members of the **Mayor's Council on Minority Issues** for your advice and support this past year as we worked to improve this community's ethnic and cultural relations and see that economic advancement is available for all of our citizens.



Rockford Global Efforts / Sister City Relationships

When we look to develop economic opportunities for Rockford, we cannot stop at our city limits. This is a global economy. We must strive for bringing Rockford to the world so that the world in turn can come to Rockford to invest. Our Sister Cities

**Leading Boldly
Working Together**

program has provided an excellent opportunity for us to expand both cultural and economic ties to the world. Since I took office, we have developed an active, working Sister Cities Committee with support from the RAEDC, RACVB, and a number of community volunteers.

In 2006, these partnerships led to trade missions to both Sweden and China and a new Sister City relationship with Ferentino Italy.

In China, we strengthened relationships with our sister city, Changzhou, where we opened the Rockford Industrial Park, anchored by local manufacturer, Bergstrom Industries. My thanks go out to Dave Rydell, CEO of Bergstrom and to William Guo, head of Bergstrom, China for their leadership in this initiative.



In Sweden, I joined over 20 other Rockford leaders as part of the largest US delegation to attend the Swedish E-Days. This business “matchmaking” enterprise helps US and Swedish businesses learn about doing business in their respective countries and develops partnerships across the globe.



As a result of our trip, we recently cut the ribbon for the U.S. Headquarters of the Swedish Company, Radius, who relocated in Rockford after learning of our strong ties to Sweden and seeing our competitive economic climate.

We will continue to develop these partnerships this year as we prepare for the upcoming American E-Days in April, in which Rockford will be a joint host with Chicago, and we will work to be part of the Chicago China Summit.

Downtown/Riverfront/Rebecca Ryan/Talent Attraction

To compete in the global market, we must attract the best and brightest talent. Thank you to the Next Rockford organization, along with RAEDC and the RACVB for bringing Rebecca Ryan to help our efforts to attract and retain talent to Rockford. Ms. Ryan’s work is based on a body of economic data showing that for cities and regions to compete globally, they must attract young talent.

Rebecca Ryan recently completed her report on Rockford and identified the key statistics to measure Rockford’s attractiveness for young talent. So how did we do? Not terrible, but not good enough either. We were “average” in all but one category, Parks and Recreation. Her report identified 21 areas of focus, **one critical area being the need to exploit the advantage of having a Downtown Riverfront.**

Now, I know it may come as a surprise to you, but I have actually been interested in Downtown Development for some time!

Our downtown neighborhoods, the River District, the Mid-Town District, and the South Main District, have become cornerstones in our efforts to revitalize Rockford and to attract and retain talent. We have recently seen the renovation of the old Gas and Electric building that brought Watt Publishing Company and Mid-Northern Group, two new businesses, to our downtown area. We have also seen the recent openings of downtown retail businesses such as *Kuma’s*, *Cru*, *Zambuco’s*, and *Chocolate by Daniels*, along with other businesses that make up the 15 new starts in 2006. Fresh, new, business concepts such as these will create the “stroll zone” that are so important for the revitalization of our downtown community.



We have heard it from consultants, we have heard it from locals, and we have even heard it from our MYAC members who were amazed at the ‘cool’ things happening in our Downtown. In fact, they were so impressed that a workshop at this year’s Youth Summit will engage our young people in exploring their dreams for our Downtown Riverfront.

The centerpiece of our downtown is our Metro Centre. I am so proud of the Metro Centre Board, the County Board and our Aldermen, on their commitment to the renovation project. Despite the chaos and criticism that seems to threaten to hold

us back on major improvements to our city government, we are moving forward with this most important project.

With the synergy of the affiliation with the Chicago Blackhawks, and the support of our local partners we are taking our downtown jewel from state of decay to state of the art. As one of my longtime friends from Chicago put it when I told him of this project, "Now that's cool!"

Our downtown redevelopment efforts are working and they will continue to grow in 2007. These efforts work and will help us land talent in Rockford.

Mayor Daley Visit

In 2006, we were honored to host Chicago Mayor, Richard J. Daley as keynote speaker for the RAEDC's Annual Meeting. Mayor Daley excited the crowd that night as he spoke of our need to work together as regional partners to compete in the global economy. As I said during my introduction of the Mayor that night, he has truly created a template for a city's renaissance and indeed for a region. Our efforts in improving education, building a safer community, and building quality capital investments demonstrate our commitment to that renaissance.



We will continue to build our relationship with Chicago as they pursue the 2016 Olympic games. The investments that will prepare us to welcome the world to the Olympic Games are the same investments that help us compete in the world each and every day. When we think and act as a strong, unified, region, **Leading Boldly and Working Together**, we can compete with any region in the world.

New Brand Identity

We are Leading Boldly and Leading Together in Rockford. To capture that spirit of coordinated, regional leadership, I am pleased to be part of our new, regional brand.

Last year, Chairman Christiansen and I set a goal of supporting our region's efforts of working closer together by creating a new regional brand identity for Rockford – one that is inclusive, inspirational, and compelling.

Under the leadership of the City of Rockford, the RACVB, the RAEDC, and Winnebago County, we have done just that.

The exhaustive process undertook inward and outward-looking research to be certain we were putting our Regions' best foot forward to the markets to whom we need to sell our community. The creative design process was well informed by strong, well-thought-out strategic planning.

Rockford's new brand identity reflects our green hills and our forests, our rivers and streams, and more importantly, it suggests our location in the literal and figurative heart of America.



Our new regional brand identity shows a unified face to the world – one of which we can be proud.

Infrastructure: Update on the Four R's and Water Quality

One common factor in our economic development wins over the past year has been that our successes are located in areas where we invested in outstanding infrastructure. Lowe's needed US20 and Springfield/Harrison; UPS needs the Airport; Anderson Packaging needed a significant investment from the City to improve its access to highways. Without good roads, it's hard to attract good jobs. You've heard me speak to this need many times when I list the 4 R's: Roads, Rail, River, and the fiber optic Ring. Well, let me give you an update on "where we are at with Our R's"

We have continued to push the NICTD commuter rail effort and have had recent open houses discussing the status of the project. While it is frustratingly slow, working through the FTA, we are pushing this as fast as we can and we should have a final report to provide to the FTA by the fall of this year.

**Leading Boldly
Working Together**

Since last year however, through major support from Senator Durbin, we are now actively pursuing the revival of Amtrak service to Rockford. We recently received a ridership and route analysis report from Amtrak, which we will take to Springfield for State investment in this system. **We are asking Senate leaders to support the estimated \$62 million price tag for the needed improvements.** This is a small price to pay to renew Amtrak service from Chicago to Rockford and on to Galena and Dubuque IA. And I mean it when I say it's a small price to pay. By comparison, the Tollway Authority will be spending soon over that amount just to improve the ramp system at the I-90 and US 20 Bypass. **We need this rail service.** We need it not just for Rockford, but for the entire Northwest part of the State. We lost Amtrak service in the early 1980's and we want it back! **Leading Boldly and Working Together** will bring rail service back to Rockford!

River

The third R: Our River: one of our most valuable assets. I wish I had a dollar for every time someone said "we need to do more with our river"... or "why don't we have any restaurants on our river?"

I agree. I join envision a busy, vibrant riverfront with shoppers and diners working their way from the museum to the Coronado; or strolling down from our nationally recognized YMCA down to our future, nationally recognized hotel and white-water park. This vision can become a reality. Understand, it will not happen by without help. It will happen when we **Lead Boldly and Work Together** to invest in creative partnerships with our Riverfront.



And these partnerships have begun:

- By partnering with Winnebago county and the Park District, our city obtained a grant from the State of Illinois to begin the design and construction of the first phase of the Rockford Riverwalk.
- We have been working to plan and design the initial Riverwalk investment, including budgeting required matching support from our City Council.
- Our City Council also supported the necessary analysis and engineering of the old Fordam Dam to evaluate its potential for future boating and recreational uses, including our proposed whitewater course.
- Finally, our City Council supported rezoning the Madison Street corridor to support the vibrant mixed-use neighborhood we envision.

We are working hard on each of these efforts. Next year when I stand on this stage, I will not be asking you to imagine a Riverwalk, I will be sharing the completion of our designs or the announcement of new private sector investments that our leadership has encouraged.

Fiber Optic Ring



The fourth "R" – our ring. Affordable, high bandwidth digital communication is key for working effectively and efficiently in today's world. In 2006, working with NIU's Broadband Development Group, we completed our planning efforts for promoting the development of broadband infrastructure. As an outcome of that effort, we are now partnering with both private and public entities to build out fiber infrastructure. As a policy, we are also building out fiber infrastructure during road reconstruction projects.

We continue to work with our partners in the Northern Illinois Technology Triangle to promote and participate in regional efforts designed to help us compete in a digital world.

Water System

And although it's not an "R", in 2006 we undertook the task of updating our outdated water system. To compete effectively, we must pursue the highest quality of life for our citizens as well as support the needs of industry.



The Water Rehabilitation Plan was passed and overwhelmingly supported to address long-standing dissatisfaction with water quality, radium standards, inconsistent water service pressure and an aging physical plant.

I am proud to report to you today, that our plan is on time and on target! In 2008, we will be able to assure our citizens with the greatest of confidence; **your water is of the highest quality.**

Roads

Our roads are the most basic item we address in defining a strong community. For our citizens going to and from work every day as well as our businesses trying to attract retail customers or access global networks, roads are the common element. In 2006, one of our major gateways, Harrison Avenue, finally saw the beginning of a long-promised rebuild. It took years of effort and savings to make that project a reality. Working in partner with the State of Illinois, this gateway, between Mulford Road and Ohio Parkway, will soon be a competitive and attractive roadway for our residents and our businesses. While Harrison is a great success, we all know that we have to invest more; and that we have to find a better way than the old property tax based road program.

Road Referendum

And that's why I took my "R's" out of order tonight. I want to finish up with the most important road issue we face.

Thanks to the bold leadership of our City Council, you, the citizens of Rockford will have the opportunity to vote for a sales tax referendum that will allow us to repair our roads and compete in a global economy. Earlier this year, the Council voted 13 to 1 to put the sales tax funding alternative on the ballot for this April.



As a Council we realize that:

- It is unacceptable to have a road plan that continues to raise our property taxes;
- It is unacceptable to continue to build debt instead of roads with over \$50 million of property tax based debt on our "community credit card" due to the old road program;
- It is unacceptable to have a capital plan that fails to invest in storm water management projects like that which was promised for the flood victim in Rolling Green, but never built, because the old way did not have enough funds.
- It is unacceptable to rely on the "vehicle sticker" for maintenance since the out-of-towners aren't required to buy one, and the enforcement was too expensive and incomplete.
- To get the ball rolling on our path to a new and better way, our City Council unanimously voted to eliminate the vehicle sticker demonstrating that there is a new day dawning in Rockford!

Ladies and gentlemen, our City Council is **Leading Boldly and Leading Together** and we are headed down a new path that just makes sense.

- It's common sense to reduce our property tax rate, which is currently the highest in the State for cities over 70,000 people. When we pass the referendum in April, that rate will continue to come down, as it did this year. **In fact, it will drop by 24 cents in the first five years alone** as we work to retire the \$50 million dollars of accumulated debt on our property taxes.
- It's common sense to start getting support for our roads from the out-of-towners who drive on them, but don't pay for them.
- It's common sense to not pay interest and not incur more debt for our children.
- It's common sense to build roads not debt. Because we will not pay interest and because the out-of-towners will help us pay, we will get \$16 million worth of work for \$10.4 million instead of \$8 million worth of work costing us \$11.6 million. **We will actually pay less, but get more!**

**Leading Boldly
Working Together**

- It's common sense because we can leverage our local referendum dollars to bring in well over \$50 million in State and Federal funds over the next five years alone.
- And it's common sense because we have tied all of this to a specific, five-year plan, with a five-year sunset provision. With this added feature, you, the voter, will have the opportunity to make sure we did what we promised we would do.

Make no mistake about it; this referendum is our road program. This referendum is our future. Rockford, we need each other to make this happen. Let's win this thing in April. **Let's Lead Boldly by Working Together.**

CONCLUSION

I would like to take this moment to thank all the City of Rockford employees that have made it their mission to attain Excellence. They are the people who get things done on a day to day basis. I applaud their commitment and I look forward to the continued work with these professionals for a better Rockford.

A perfect example of this commitment was found during the Labor Day flooding. There were long days and late nights for many of our employees as they joined local volunteer efforts to aid our flood victims. They were first on the scene, they were there to offer aid, and they worked relentlessly to provide answers and assistance to our citizens. Thank you!



In defining our path towards more effective customer service, we identified a core set of values for our organization: **A.C.T.I.O.N: Accountability, Customer Focused, Team Driven, Innovative, Open, and Never Give Up!**

We are challenging our employees to work by these values and to serve by these values. We made this the core of our work ethic.

In December of 2006, for the first time ever, we recognized those employees that had set themselves apart in their job performance and had personified our core values. Tonight, it is my great honor to introduce to you the winners of our first annual **A.C.T.I.O.N.** Award Program. Would those winners who are here tonight, please stand and be recognized.

I would also like to recognize those that have taken their commitment for the community one step further. To our current employees are serving in the military and for the many others that have done so in the past, including assignments in combat zones. To our many citizens and to their friends and family, I would like to take this moment to recognize and thank them for their service to our country.

As a result of a lot of hard work, **Leading Boldly and Working Together**, we have accomplished much already:

- We have cut future health care costs for City employees by millions,
- We have eliminated forever the vehicle sticker,
- We have provided a balanced budget with a lower property tax rate, and
- We have helped raise millions of dollars for the schools while putting children back in classrooms through our anti-truancy initiative.

We have a lot more to do, but we have also accomplished a lot.

While we will continue to have differences, we have more in common. Despite vigorous debate, we have come together to support new efforts and ideas.

Deals like the MetroCentre and Lowes and our Sales Tax initiative and RockStat, have an impact that transcends the individual project and touches the future.

**Leading Boldly
Working Together**

In fact, we are blazing a trail that shows innovation in government. In a global economic reality, where the prizes are won by the innovators, just think what it means for us to be branded as an innovative community.

What will the payoffs be if around the Country and around the world we are known as "those people in Rockford who keep trying new things?" Sure, some ideas will work, and others might not. But there is an intrinsic value in innovation.

It was their value of innovation that led Howard Colman and other great Rockford entrepreneurs to lead this community to greatness. And it will be the continued innovation of a Hamilton Sundstrand, Woodward, Rockford Toolcraft, or yes, even the City of Rockford, that will lead us to even greater days ahead.

We have the creative energy to change the course of our lives, of our city, even our Nation and the world. It is up to each of us to not only discuss the possible but make them inevitable.

Ladies and gentlemen, Rockford's best days are not behind us. They lie ahead. **By Leading Boldly and Working Together, We can and will achieve Excellence Everywhere for Everyone.**

God Bless you, God bless our Rockford and Good Night.



LITTLE CITY, BIG LIFE. WE ARE MOM AND
APPLE PIE AND THE TECHNOLOGY THAT
MAKES THE SPACE SHUTTLE FLY. WE
ARE FALLING LEAVES AND RISING HOPES.
THE HANDS, INGENUITY AND SPIRIT THAT
BUILD A NATION. A RIVER RUNS THROUGH
US LIKE A PROUD, PULSING HEART OF

POWERFUL MIDWESTERN VALUES, ENDURING, NOURISHING AND TRUE.
THIS IS A PLACE WITH A GRAVITY ALL ITS OWN. WE ARE AS PROUD OF
OUR FOREFATHERS AND MOTHERS AS WE ARE INSPIRED BY THE
PROMISE OUR FUTURE HOLDS, PROMISE AS BROAD AND FULL AS THE
STRIPE OF OUR NATION'S FLAG. ALL PEOPLE ARE WELCOME IN THIS
QUINTESSENTIALLY REAL, TRULY ORIGINAL NEW HEART OF AMERICA.

Leading Boldly
Working Together



Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey



City of Rockford
425 East State Street Rockford, IL USA 61104
(815) 987-5590 phone • (815) 967-6952 fax